

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

A Brief Introduction to the *‘Aqīdah*
of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah*

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abdul-Ḥamīd al-Athari

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Transliteration Chart

أ	a
آ - ي	ā
ب	b
ت	t
ة	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ

Foreword

Shaykh Sa'ūd ibn Ibrāhīm ash-Shuraym

Praise be to Allah, alone, and blessings and peace be upon the one after whom there will be no Prophet.

I have read what our brother in Islam Shaykh 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul-Ḥamīd Āl Ismā'il has written on the beliefs of the saved and victorious group, *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, which he has entitled *Islamic Beliefs — A Brief Introduction to the 'Aqīdah of Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, and I found what he has written to be useful and valuable. In it, the author sums up the beliefs of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, the basic principles which, whoever holds fast to them will be saved, and whoever turns away from them will be doomed... we seek refuge with Allah from that.

The author has worked hard and deserves to be thanked for his work. He has written in a good style that is easy to understand for anyone who reads it or hears it.

May Allah reward him with good and cause his book to benefit people. May He bless him and us with beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds, and help all the Muslims to follow the path of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions, and the path followed by the best generations, for He is All-Hearing, Ever-Responsive.

Sa'ūd ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muhammad ash-Shuraym

*Qāḍī of the Supreme Court in Makkah,
Imam and Khaṭīb in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*

Foreword

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Jamīl Zayno

Praise be to Allah, we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil actions. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomsoever Allah sends astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, alone, with no partner or associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

I have read the book *Islamic Beliefs — A Brief Introduction to the 'Aqīdah of Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, and it seems to me that it is a good book in which the author has compiled valuable information, for which he deserves to be appreciated and encouraged. He gives a detailed explanation of the '*aqīdah* of the righteous *salaf*, in a style that the Muslim can understand easily and learn about different topics connected to this issue. I advise all Muslims, especially seekers of knowledge, to read this book and benefit from it. I ask Allah to benefit the Muslims through this book, and to make this effort sincerely for His sake.

Muhammad ibn Jamīl Zayno

Teacher in Dār al-Hadith al-Khayriyah
Makkah al-Mukarramah

Definition of 'Aqīdah

'Aqīdah in Arabic

The word '*aqīdah* (belief) is derived from the word '*aqd*, which means tying, confirming, consolidation, affirmation, holding together, and making firm. It refers to certainty (*yaqīn*) and being sure.

It means tying as opposed to untying or loosening. From the same root is derived the word '*uqdah* as in the phrase '*uqdat al-yamīn* (deliberate oath) or '*uqdat an-nikāḥ* (marriage contract). Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ

(سورة المائدة: ٨٩)

... ﴿٨٩﴾

«Allah will not punish you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He will punish you for your deliberate oaths...» (Qur'an 5: 89)

'*Aqīdah* means a principle or belief in which there is no room for doubt on the part of the one who believes in it. '*Aqīdah* in Islam refers to belief (in the heart) rather than (visible) actions, such as believing in the existence of Allah and in the Messengers. The plural of '*aqīdah* is '*aqā'id*.¹¹

¹¹ See the Arabic-language dictionaries: *Lisān al-'Arab*, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* and *al-Mu'jam al-Waṣīṭ*, under the heading '*aqada*.

In conclusion, that which a person firmly believes in is his 'aqīdah, whether it is true or false.

'Aqīdah in shari'ah terminology

'Aqīdah refers to things which a person must believe to be true in his heart and of which he should be certain and with which he should be content, so that they are believed with certain faith that is unshaken by doubts.

In other words, this is certain faith which is not contaminated by any kind of doubts. It must be in accordance with reality, unaffected by doubt or speculation. If knowledge does not attain the degree of certain faith (*yaqīn*), it cannot be called 'aqīdah.

It is called 'aqīdah because a person ties or attaches (*ya'qidu*) his heart to it.

Islamic 'aqīdah

Islamic 'aqīdah means certain belief in the Lordship and Divinity of Allah, in His names and attributes, in His angels, His books, His Messengers, the Last Day, the Divine decree both good and bad, and all the matters of the unseen and the basic principles that have been proven (in Islam), that on which there was consensus among the righteous *salaf*, complete submission to the commands and rulings of Allah, obedience to Him and following His messenger (ﷺ).

When we use the word 'aqīdah on its own, we are referring to the 'aqīdah of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, because that is the

Islam with which Allah is pleased as the religion for His slaves. This is the 'aqīdah of the best three generations, the *Ṣaḥābah*, the *Tābi'īn* and those who followed them in truth.

Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah use other words that are synonymous with 'aqīdah and are used to refer to it. These words include *Tawḥīd*, *Sunnah*, *Uṣūl ad-Dīn*, *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, *Shari'ah* and *Eemān*.

These are the most well-known words that *Ahl as-Sunnah* use to refer to knowledge of 'aqīdah.

Definition of the *Salaf*

Salaf in Arabic language

The word *salafa* refers to something in the past, that came before. The phrase *salafa ash-shay'u salafan* means that the thing is in the past. The word *salaf* refers to the people who came before, or who went ahead on a journey. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿فَلَمَّا ءَاسَفُونَا اُنْتَقِمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاغْرَقْنَاهُمْ اَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِّلَاخِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾﴾

(سورة الزخرف: ٥٥-٥٦)

«So when they [the people of Pharaoh] angered Us, We punished them, and drowned them all.

And We made them a precedent [*salafan*] [as a lesson for those coming after them], and an example to later generations.»

(Qur'an 43: 55-56)

— i.e., We have made them a precedent for those who do the same as they did, so that those who come after them may learn a lesson from them, and so that others may be warned because of them.

The word *salaf* also refers to “those who came before you of your forefathers and relatives who are your elders and betters. Hence, the first generation of the *Tābi'in* are known as *as-salaf as-sāliḥ* (the righteous forebears).”¹²

¹² See the Arabic-language dictionaries: *Tāj al-'Arūs*, *Lisān al-'Arab* and *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, under the heading *salafa*.

Salaf in shari'ah terminology

When the scholars of *'aqidah* use the word *salaf* on its own, they refer to the *Ṣaḥābah*, or the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi'in*, or the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'in* and their followers in the best generations, such as the leading scholars who were known for their trustworthiness and virtue, and for following the Sunnah and teaching others to do likewise, and for avoiding *bid'ah* and warning others against it, and those whom the ummah recognizes as leaders and prominent figures in Islam. Hence, the first generation is known as *as-salaf as-sāliḥ* (the righteous forebears).

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بُيِّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾﴾

(سورة التيساء: ١١٥)

«And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger [Muhammad] after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell — what an evil destination!»

(Qur'an 4: 115)

﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾﴾ (سورة التوبة: ١٠٠)

«And the foremost to embrace Islam of the *Muhājirīn* and the *Anṣār* and also those who followed them exactly [in Faith]. Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them